

AVERY

MESSENGER

WINTER 2014/2015

AVERY RESEARCH CENTER

125

"THE AVERY"
History, Spirit, Memory, Culture

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A Publication of the

AVERY RESEARCH CENTER

FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

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ABOUT AVERY

The Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture is located on the site of the former Avery Normal Institute.

The Avery Normal Institute, founded and maintained by the American Missionary Association (AMA), was a hub for Charleston's African-American community from 1865–1954 that trained its students for professional careers and leadership roles.



Image is from the November 1, 1879, *Harper's Weekly* story on Reverend Charles Avery and the success of the Avery Normal Institute. Reverend Avery, associated with the AMA, bequested \$10,000 from his estate, towards the purchase of the site at 125 Bull Street and construction of the Institute. The new Avery Normal Institute, named in his honor, was dedicated on May 7, 1868, with space for 400 students.

In 1985, the alumni of the Avery Normal Institute, spearheaded by the Honorable Lucille Whipper, formed the Avery Institute of Afro-American History and Culture (AIAAHC).

After much community discussion and negotiation, the AIAAHC joined with the College of Charleston to establish the Avery Research Center to preserve the legacy of the Avery Normal Institute, as well as to educate and promote the unique history and culture of the African diaspora with emphasis on African Americans in Charleston, the South Carolina Lowcountry, and South Carolina at large.

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AVERY RESEARCH CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT PATRICIA WILLIAMS LESSANE, PHD

Dear Avery Research Center Supporters—

The Fall term is over and the holidays are upon us. As usual, we've had a calendar full of provocative and informative programs, beginning with African American Studies Department's (AASD) kick-off week. Noted scholar, Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, was one of the week's featured speakers and he discussed his book, *The Black Campus Movement—Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965–1972*. That week, we also mounted, *Cleveland Sellers: The SNCC Years—Coming through the Fire*. Developed by Avery Research Center curator Curtis Franks and using material from his personal collection and the Papers of Cleveland Sellers (which are housed here at the Avery Research Center), the exhibit highlights the early activism of Dr. Sellers and situates his experiences within the larger Black Student Movement of the 1960s. The exhibit itself, and Franks's framing of Sellers's story, was indeed timely, coming on the heels of the outrage and protests mounted after the senseless killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

In September, we also welcomed Dr. Antonio Tillis, the new dean of the School of Languages, Cultures, and World Affairs, to The College of Charleston. In just a few short months, Dr. Tillis has demonstrated his global thinking regarding the newly minted African American Studies major and the Avery Research Center. As a result of his vision, The College of Charleston will host the 2015 Association for the Worldwide Study of the African Diaspora (ASWAD) conference. Together with AASD and Carolina Lowcountry and Atlantic World Program (CLAW), Avery Research Center will play a central role in the execution of such a momentous conference.

This year our outreach initiatives have expanded to include partnerships with The Cannon Street YMCA, WoSe African Drum & Dance of

Charleston, St. James Presbyterian Church, and The Colour of Music Festival. By sharing our resources with the community, we were able to provide West African dance and sweetgrass artistry classes to youth on the peninsula and James Island. The continued generous support of SunTrust Bank enabled us to bring the Fisk Jubilee Singers® for a command performance as part of the Second Annual Colour of Music Festival, as well as a choral exchange with Cane Bay High School.

Other highlights from the fall semester include lectures and book signings by conservationist Virginia Beach, playwright and author Pearl Cleage, biographer Linda Holmes, and public health scholar Dr. Ndidi Amutah, our third annual recipient of the Ernest E. Just Prize.

Indeed, it has been a great year, and next year will be even greater! In the upcoming weeks, you will receive information about our 2015 celebration of the Avery Normal Institute's 150th anniversary. Next year's programmatic theme builds on the legacy of the Avery Institute and highlights the importance of education and scholastic excellence within the African-American community. Throughout the year, we will examine and commemorate significant milestones in Black education and honor the contributions of noted and local African-American educators.

September 12, 2015 marks the sesquicentennial of the Avery Institute. Established by the American Missionary Association in 1865, the school would become a bastion of scholastic excellence and a trailblazer in Black education. We will bring together some of the nation's greatest educators and scholars to discuss the history of Black education and contemporary barriers to quality education many African Americans face today.

As we close out 2014, please consider sowing a financial seed in the Avery Research Center. Whether through the Avery Institute Board or the College of Charleston Foundation, please donate so we may continue and expand on the work that we are doing.

Have a Happy New Year!

pwl



AVERY INSTITUTE PRESIDENT'S REPORT CATHERINE BOAGS

Hello Everyone,

Our annual meeting was held on Saturday, June 28, 2014. I want to thank our members for taking the time to attend. The meeting focused on the work of Dr. Lela Haynes Session, Jeanes Supervisor for Berkeley County. Dr. Session attended Avery Institute prior to studying at Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina.

The Board of Directors for 2014–2015 was also installed at the annual meeting. Leaving the Board this year are Angel Payton-Harmon and Benjamin Anderson. I want to thank them for their years of dedicated service and their support of the Avery Institute.

The Avery Institute Board held its first meeting since our summer break on Monday, September 8, 2014. Officers elected were: President, Catherine Boags; Vice-President, Pearl Gibbs; Treasurer, John Buncum; Secretary, Kathy Smalls.

This year, the Avery Institute Board will work to promote the Avery Research Center's effort to display more archival collections donated by the local community. As part of this effort, documents from the Papers of the Rev. John T. Enwright, minister of the Plymouth Congregational Church of Christ, Charleston, SC, from 1949–1974 are currently featured through March 2015.

In celebration of the Colour of Music Festival, another display showcases Black musicians. The Festival, organized by Lee Pringle, presents and celebrates Black classical musicians and their works to the Charleston community. The Avery Institute Board and the Avery Research Center, along with SunTrust Bank, sponsored the Fisk Jubilee Singers® as part of the festival.

Other citywide collaborations with the Avery Research Center include MOJA's Juried Art Show and Literary Corner. The featured author at this year's Literary Corner was the renowned Pearl Cleage.

These are just a few of the programs that the Avery Institute has recently supported. I want to encourage each of you to continue supporting the Avery Research Center. The programs the Avery Research Center develops and hosts make the Avery Research Center a viable presence in our community by presenting African-American history and culture.

Thank you for your continued support of the Avery Institute and the Avery Research Center.

“The AVERY” Spirit, Memory, Culture

by Julie Dash

Over the years, with the support of public and private sectors dually cultivating its presence in the Lowcountry, the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture has survived and flourished. The Executive Director, Dr. Patricia Williams Lessane, has made the facility available to research scholars, artists, Avery Institute alumni, students, and family gatherings alike. With the support of strategic development by the College of Charleston, its wide doors are open to everyone. Among community locals, this distinguished institution is simply known, affectionately, as the Avery.

The Avery is a historic institution born of a deep sense of community and culture within the Gullah-Geechee Corridor in Lowcountry South Carolina. In 1865, the Avery opened as a normal school for African-American children. My father and his six brothers attended the Avery Normal School during the years 1921 through 1954. Today, the brick and mortar have been renovated, its mission expanded and revitalized, and its open-door culture continues to serve the community in exceptional ways as a museum, archive, community center, and historical site.

Our family gathered at the Avery for my paternal grandmother's 100th birthday celebration. As we toured the facility to sit where our fathers once sat, I was able to visit the renovated version of my father's second-floor classroom, where he and my uncles received their first elementary school lessons. The classroom is permanently open to visitors; and in this simple but elegant connection, our collective past is made present, made viable and open to the general public. Last year, the community joined my class for a screening of a film I directed for the CBS Television Network, *The Rosa Parks Story*. For smaller groups with audio/visual needs, there is the SMART classroom on the first floor next to the Reading Room, where patrons come to do their research. In fact, I am presently doing research for a new documentary film, so I am in there often. It is always abuzz with activity; and if am lucky enough, I will look up to find the invincible Mrs. Cynthia McCottry-Smith, former teacher of the Avery Institute and beloved community member, joining me. She is ninety-one years old and still as vibrant and a fount of knowledge as ever, helping to keep the spirit of the Avery Institute alive.

The Avery Research Center provided valuable research for my Sundance Award-winning film, *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), which also became the first feature film directed by an African-American woman to receive national theatrical distribution. Then in 2004, *Daughters of the Dust* joined a select group of films chosen by the Library of Congress to be preserved and protected as national treasures in the National Film Registry. *Daughters of the Dust* is about the cultural traditions of our Native-American ancestors and the Gullah-Geechee people, descendants of enslaved Africans who continue to thrive in the South Carolina Lowcountry.

When I began my research for this project, the Avery gave me all access to its archival holdings of photographs, oral histories, books, newspaper clipping, and audio recordings pertaining to Gullah-Geechee culture. One such important piece of information



Julie Dash

was about the history and origins of bottle trees that often appeared in the Lowcountry (a recurring visual theme relating to ancestor fellowship in *Daughters of the Dust*). Since the release of *Daughters*, Ki-Kongo-inspired bottle trees are seen in gardens across the United States, and the phrase has become a part of our lexicon. Twenty years after *Daughters* was released, the Avery Research Center honored the cast and crew of our film production with a symposium and art competition, “We Carry These Memories Inside of We.” One of the highlights of the three-day symposium was the dedication of the bottle tree created by local artist Jean-Marie Mauclet, now permanently displayed on Avery

Research Center's front lawn.

There are many historic landmarks in Charleston that evoke a continuity of spirit, memory, lifestyle, and culture. However, as a filmmaker, I often consider them as character actors in a much larger drama. These sites of history and influence simultaneously represent the past and the present; and for me, situated in the heart of South Carolina's oldest coastal city, the Avery stands tall among those heroic characters.

Throughout its long and impressive history, the venerable Avery has maintained a continuity of presence and dedication to local traditions. It is history itself.



Top row l-r: Six (of the seven) Dash family men who attended Avery Institute: St. Julian Dash, Roger Dash, Charles Dash (Julie's Father), Herbert Wilmot Dash, John Thompson Dash, Ernest Alonzo Dash. (Not shown, Samuel Dash). Bottom row l-r: The father and mother of the Dash men: Charles St. Julian Dash (Julie's Grandfather), Randolph Dash (son of Herbert Wilmot Dash), Ethel Dash (Julie's Grandmother). Photo courtesy of Julie Dash

Julie Dash is an independent filmmaker, author, and educator. Dash, formerly a visiting professor with the College of Charleston's African American Studies Program, is currently working on a feature-length documentary chronicling the life of Vertamae Grosvenor.

FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES, I have diligently labored in the vineyards called the College of Charleston's Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture. Given my longevity and involvement in this all-important work, I have had numerous opportunities to engage with many people inside and outside of the academe. The conversations regarding the history and culture of African-descended people, as well as their indelible contributions, have been provocative and wide ranging. One such conversation centered on the size of the building. The topic intrigued me, considering the building was built during Reconstruction to be a school for African-American children. After a moment of quiet deliberation, I surmised, "Perhaps the size of the building was/is symbolic of the Herculean challenges and tasks that lay ahead—educating a race of people who heretofore had been denied that opportunity and providing an environment for the growth and development of new leadership as the experiment of shared governance was being implemented." To that end, the structure was impressive then as it is impressive now, but the work then just as it is now is from "the inside out".

AGENCY, ACTIVISM, & ADVOCACY

Pillars of the Black Intellectual Tradition - Part I

by Curtis J. Franks

THE Avery Normal Institute (and later Avery High School) graduates have forever shaped the South Carolina Lowcountry, the nation, the world. For almost thirty years, its successor and namesake, the Avery Research Center, has worked to highlight the centrality of Africans and their descendants to the history and culture of this region and throughout the Atlantic world. Through a myriad of programs and activities, as well as collaborations with other institutions and organizations both local and beyond, the Avery Research Center supports and produces scholarly works and projects to document and advance its mission. Certainly, the contributions of African people to the Lowcountry's history and culture are quite evident even to the Avery Research Center's most casual visitor. The Avery Research Center's displays and exhibitions convey a strong thematic thrust and spatial efficiency that are informed by one of the central themes of the African-American experience: Agency, Activism, and Advocacy. This thematic thrust permeates and resonates throughout the building, showcasing how vitally important it is to the clear understanding of the local landscape (both historically and culturally speaking) and the continuing relevance of the lived experiences of African-descended people.

UPON entering the Avery Research Center through the ground level doors, one becomes conscious of the low ceilings and narrow hallways. I can imagine for some this could evoke powerful imagery related to that long, tortuous journey of enslaved Africans in the bottom of slave ships, or the idea of being confined—whether during enslavement, segregation, gentrification, restrictive covenants, etc. State after state found various ways to disfranchise Black people, including letting mob violence and lynchings go unchecked and unpunished by authorities. Thus, the Black community was under siege from numerous fronts; however, these challenges did not go unmet. Among the activist-scholars and intellectuals during the period who were central in confronting these injustices was the Fisk and Harvard-educated Dr. W.E.B.

DuBois, one of the founding members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP, 1909). DuBois's, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) clearly and accurately articulated the primary issue in American race relations, and by extension in the world, wherein he wrote, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." Indeed, as the twentieth century gained its footing in the United States, lynchings increased and riots became quite common, especially during the Red Summer of 1919. Not even Charleston could escape the violence, enduring its own "Red Summer" that same year.

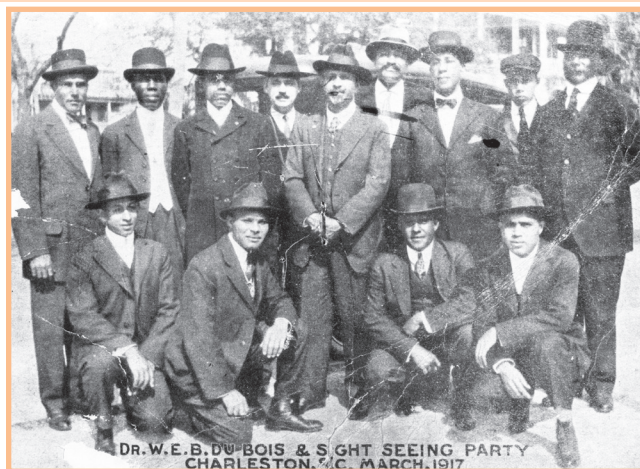
TWO years before that, however, DuBois visited Charleston, and the Avery Research Center has a photograph of him with several key members of the Charleston African-American community in its collection. Among the men in the photograph (shown below) are Benjamin F. Cox, principal of Avery Normal Institute at the time; and Edwin "Teddy" Harleston, a talented visual artist and Avery graduate who was also the founding president of the NAACP's Charleston Chapter. During Harleston's tenure, the Charleston Black community organized a successful petition drive that abolished legislation

banning African-Americans from teaching in Black schools on the peninsula. One member of the petition drive was Septima P. Clark. Clark, whose collection is one of the most often used of the Avery Research Center's archives, was terminated from her teaching job in 1956 because of her activism on behalf of Black Charlestonians. Thereafter, she led literacy training initiatives with the Highlander Folk School, Citizenship Schools, and in conjunction with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The photograph of Septima P. Clark, taken by Brian Lanker, that graces the cover of his book, *I Dream a World: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America* (1989), hangs along the wall close to the Reading Room, which is named for the Phillis Wheatley Literary and Social Club.

THE Phillis Wheatley Literary and Social Club was founded in 1916 by Jeanette K. Cox, wife of Benjamin Cox, to advance the self-improvement of its membership and to improve the

wider community through charitable efforts. Anna Julia Cooper, educator and leader in the Black women's club movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, expressed the thinking of numerous club women when she stated, "Education and intellectual development were necessary for all women, but they were essential for Black women, for they could not afford to just look pretty and appear well in society. It was imperative for them to prepare themselves to address the special needs of the race which they and only they can help; that the world needs and is already asking for their trained and efficient forces." For its ninetieth anniversary in 2006, the Phillis Wheatley Literary and Social Club commissioned Carol A. Simmons to create original artwork to commemorate the milestone. The subsequent painting of Phillis Wheatley currently hangs in the Reading Room for all to see.

THE labors of the Phillis Wheatley Literary and Social Club and other Black club women are documented in the Avery Research Center's collections and represent the very finest of "agency, advocacy, and activism" in the Black community. Perhaps it is most fitting, then, that the Phillis Wheatley Literary and Social Club Reading Room is where numerous creative and scholarly projects begin. (*To be continued in the next issue of the Avery Messenger.*)



Dr. W. E. B. DuBois (back row, 5th from left) with businessmen, educators, and clergy from Charleston, SC's Black community. Shown on right is the West African Adinkra Nyansapo/Wisdom Knot symbolizing wisdom, ingenuity, intelligence, and patience. It conveys the idea that "a wise person has the capacity to choose the best means to attain a goal."

AVERY ARCHIVES NEWS

Finding Aids for the following collections are now available online:
http://avery.cofc.edu/archives/collection_list.php

FRANK A. DeCOSTA PAPERS, 1847–2000 (AMN 1106)

Frank Augustus DeCosta (1910–1972) was an educator, administrator, and scholar born in Charleston, South Carolina. In a career that spanned four decades, DeCosta was a teacher, principal, education supervisor and department chair, director of instruction and student teaching, Foreign Service statistical officer, and graduate school dean. The collection includes correspondence, research notes, essays, reports, speeches, financial documents, photographs, family histories, and academic and travel-related ephemera that highlight his professional and personal life. The bulk of the collection's materials illustrates DeCosta's educational



Charcoal portrait of Frank DeCosta
by David Huatt
(c. 1966)

foundation and expansive career as an academic, but also includes extensive correspondence to his family and colleagues; materials from DeCosta's tour with the United States Agency for International Development in Kaduna, Nigeria; and photographs featuring several generations of the DeCosta Family.

VIRGINIA M. GERATY PAPERS, 1915–2007 (AMN 1123)

Virginia Mixson Geraty (1915–2004) studied the language and culture of the Yonkes Island and Edisto-area Gullah people for over fifty years. The collection contains personal and professional documents, manuscripts and literary productions, correspondence, clippings, and other materials relating to Geraty's lifelong work in preserving and teaching the Gullah language. Materials in the collection date from 1915–2007, with bulk dates spanning the years 1978–2004.

JULIA ALSTON GOURDINE PAPERS, 1880–2002 (AMN 1130)

Julia Waites Alston Gourdine (1923–2009) was an elementary school educator who worked in the Charleston County School District for thirty-five years. The majority of the collection contains materials pertaining to Gourdine's position as Senior Trustee Board member of "Mother" Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (Charleston, SC), but also includes documents and photographs regarding Gourdine's family, educational, professional, civic, and social affiliations.

PETER H. WOOD PAPERS, 1964–1974 (AMN 1131)

Peter Hutchins Wood (1943–) is an historian and author of *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*. Wood was a Humanities Officer for the Rockefeller Foundation before teaching Colonial American History at Duke University from 1975 to 2008, where he was named Professor Emeritus of History. Wood wrote the original version of *Black Majority* (published in 1974) as his PhD dissertation at Harvard University. This collection holds research material relating to *Black Majority*.

ROSLEE T. GREEN DOUGLAS PAPERS, 1934–2005 (AMN 1132)

Roslee Tenetha Green Douglas, (1928–2011) was a nurse, health administrator, and two-time presidential appointee during the Ronald Reagan Presidential Administration. Green Douglas was Avery Institute, Class of 1947; Lincoln School for Nurses, Class of 1952; and the first African-American graduate of Medical University of South Carolina's College of Nursing in 1972. Later, Green Douglas became the first African American to serve on the South Carolina Industrial Commission. Then in 1981, she was selected as the Director of the Office of Minority Economic Impact in United States Department of Energy, becoming the first African-American female appointee under the Reagan Administration. Papers include brief documents and photographs regarding her position as Director of the Office of Minority Economic Impact (1981–1986). The collection also holds documents and photographs of the Avery Institute Class of 1947 Reunion in 2002.

HENRY HARLESTON FLEMING PAPERS, 1870–2007 (AMN 1133)

Henry Harleston Fleming (1916–2007) was a composer, arranger, professor, and director of the choirs at Burke High School (Charleston, SC) and South Carolina State University (Orangeburg, SC). Fleming was accompanist and director for several regional music ensembles, including the Choraliers Music Club, the Charleston Symphony, the Greater Charleston Choral Society, and the Omega Ensemble for his fraternity chapter of Omega Psi Phi, Inc. The collection contains sheet music; compositions and arrangements written by Harleston Fleming; and commercially published scores (classical, sacred, choral, twentieth-century spirituals, musicals, motion picture and popular twentieth-century scores) used in his professional and personal career as a chorus director and pianist. Also contained are Harleston family documents, photographs, and audio-visual materials—including those regarding Fleming's grandfather Edwin Gaillard "Captain" Harleston and his uncle, noted artist Edwin Augustus Harleston.

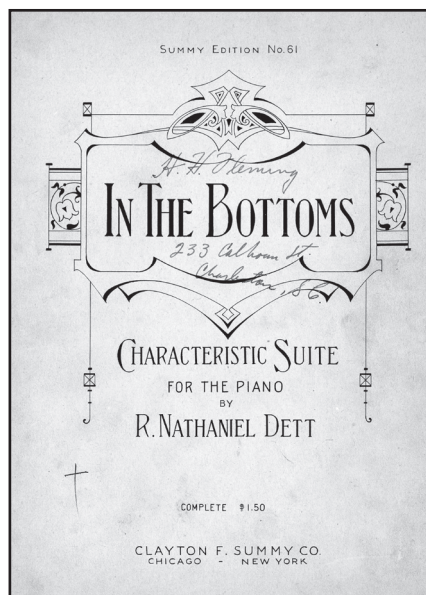


Image from the Fleming Papers:
Sheet music cover of R. Nathaniel Dett's score, "In the Bottoms" (c.1939). "In the Bottoms" is a piano suite designed to portray moods or scenes of African-American Southern life. "In the Bottoms" premiered at the Chicago Music Hall in 1913.

DR. ELIZABETH M. BEAR COLLECTION, 1922–2006 (AMN 1134)

Elizabeth M. Bear is a Professor Emeritus and former director of the Nurse-Midwifery program at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) School of Nursing. Bear's collection reflects her avid interest in the nurse-midwifery profession, notably, the education of African-American midwives (lay and nurse-midwives).

DR. FRANK G. HAYNE PAPERS, 1911–1987 (AMN 1135)

Frank George Hayne (1909–1984) was a dentist in Charleston, South Carolina. He attended Avery Institute, Immaculate Conception High School, Fisk University, and Meharry Medical College. Professionally, Hayne was affiliated with the National Dental Association; the American Dental Association; and the South Carolina Medical, Dental, and Pharmaceutical Association. He was also a member of the Beta Kappa Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and the Athenians. The collection contains correspondence, photographs, and various organizational materials regarding Hayne's education and professional career.

Archives News reported by Aaron Spelbring and Georgette Mayo.

2014 SUMMER INTERNS REFLECTION

THE PLUNGE INTO CHARLESTON

By Lewam "Lulu" Dejen

Anxiety is often only the pretense for discovery, and one of the clearest memories of Charleston I have is fervently suppressing anxiety as I left the airport to begin my tenure as the Avery Research Center's summer intern for 2014. My stomach turned constantly and I didn't say much, attempting to absorb the vast "newness" of my environment. That I'd be working with the two women in the car for the next five weeks, coupled with my first taste of the "real South", made me nervous.

Once we reached the heart of Charleston, I noticed a few things. Every house in sight seemed to beg for demolition, if not serious renovation; but what I would learn soon enough, though, was that those buildings donned their age proudly. They were history lessons textbooks couldn't quite do justice.

Throughout the next few weeks, I was an active participant of life. Staff members introduced me to some of the most fascinating history I'd been taught. Evening programs included a student film, a meeting to push for labor unions in South Carolina, and an advocacy group asking others to visit Cuba. This was a Charleston missing from school curriculum—a diverse community (age, race, class, etc.), experiences that challenged my views, and an immersion into history.

I now realize that the ride with Savannah and Ms. Wright should have been full of smiles. I could have asked Savannah about her next amazing literary project or Ms. Wright about when she was next going to Ghana and if she could design me a pair of earrings. Yet now I know more about their lives, and the lives of others I met, interviewed, and befriended. My experience as the Avery Research Center's summer intern, if anything, reaffirmed the notion that one will never stop learning. More importantly, it taught me the beauty of that process.



(l-r) Lewam Dejen with Dr. Elizabeth Bear

The Stanford University/Avery Research Center Summer Internship Program allows Stanford undergraduate students to gain professional training and hands-on experience in transcribing and processing manuscript collections and oral histories by working in the Avery Research Center archives. Our Stanford University summer intern for 2014 was Ms. Lewam "Lulu" Dejen, who joined us after completing her first year at Stanford. During the internship, Lulu attended Avery Research Center public programs, went on field trips with staff members, and processed the Dr. Elizabeth M. Bear Collection (AMN 1134). We thank Dr. Harry J. Elam, Jr., (Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University) for his continued support of the Stanford University/Avery Research Center PARTNERSHIP!

DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

Portions of the Esau Jenkins Papers (1963–2003, AMN 1004) are now available online through the Lowcountry Digital Library: <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/esau-jenkins-papers-1963-2003>. Esau Jenkins (1910–1972) a businessman and civil rights leader, was born and raised on Johns Island, South Carolina. Jenkins founded the Progressive Club in 1948 that encouraged and coordinated successful local voter registration efforts with the help of the Citizenship School. In 1959, he organized the Citizens' Committee of Charleston County, which was dedicated to the economic, cultural, and political improvement of local African Americans.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

- Dr. W. Scott Poole, writer and associate professor of history at the College of Charleston, donated a numbered and signed print of *Buffalo Soldiers* by artist Don Troiani.

- Our newest acquisition is a collection of over 200 pieces of African artwork, generously donated by Mr. John Dupree. The art pieces were collected in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) by Mr. Dupree in the mid-1970s. Mr. Dupree was in Zaire as a member of a small team of Federal Aviation Administration staff, at the request of then-President Mobutu, to assist in establishing a civil aviation organization for the country. The collection includes sculptures, masks, furniture, and paintings that are constructed with a variety of materials, including ivory, wood, and metal. The pieces range in size and style and are representative of the many artistic identities within the different regions of the Congo.



Ivory bust of woman with traditional hairstyle, mounted on wood base. height: 12". (John Dupree Collection)

The PHILLIS WHEATLEY LITERARY & SOCIAL CLUB READING ROOM

Source of Discovery & Connection

by Daron L. Calhoun & Aaron Spelbring

The Phillis Wheatley Literary and Social Club Reading Room is the host site of discovery, self-reflection, and connection. Within these four walls, we assist scholars of all professions as they explore the over 200 collections that are preserved and housed at the Avery Research Center. We offer support to genealogists of all levels with Lowcountry ties as they search for their hidden roots. We teach students from near and far—many who have never conducted archival research—on the processes of primary-source studies. In the Reading Room, this exploration into African-American history begins with a simple phrase, “Greetings! What can we help you find today?” As the core staff of the Reading Room, we do not view ourselves as the gatekeepers, but rather as guides who lead patrons to knowledge unknown. Scholars, students, and community members gather in this room daily with the hopes of finding the missing pieces to their puzzles, and it is our duty to direct them to the right path.



Avery Research Center Archives Staff:

(l-r): Georgette Mayo, Processing Archivist; Kelly Hogan, Graduate Assistant; Aaron Spelbring, Manager of Archival Services; Daron Calhoun, Graduate Assistant/Special Projects

STUDENT RESEARCH

Each semester, the Reading Room receives over two hundred students from the College of Charleston, Trident Technical College, and the Citadel Military College to do research for class projects, theses, and independent studies. The staff's goal is to ensure each student leaves with a proficient knowledge of how to conduct primary-source research and how to contextualize their findings within their work. We offer class workshops on archival research and have a rapport with professors who give students writing assignments on Avery Research Center collections. The course Educational Foundations, which is regularly offered at the College of Charleston, is a prime example of this sort of relationship we have. Each semester, students enrolled in this general education course use our numerous collections to construct a primary-source analysis paper. Most recently, they researched the Septima P. Clark Papers, Esau Jenkins Papers, and the Bernice Robinson Papers to build an historical narrative and argument based on the sources. They answered such questions as, “How was education used in Charleston and the Lowcountry to advance the goals of the Civil Rights Movement?” and “What role did the Progressive Club, the Citizenship Schools, and the Highlander Folk School play in the Civil Rights Movement?” When students first come in, many are overwhelmed with the assignment; however, as we aid them along their research, they begin to acquire key skills needed to form their argument. We take pride in knowing the staff helps students to develop in essential areas of their studies.

GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

At the close of the academic year, the Reading Room welcomes what we commonly label as Genealogy Season. During the summer months at the Avery Research Center, we often have an increased amount of families conducting genealogical research on relatives with Lowcountry ties. Although we are not primarily a genealogical repository, we do offer researchers sources that can lead them in the proper direction. Many genealogists use our extensive church and organizational records, such as the St. Matthews Episcopal Church Records and the Mickey Funeral Home Collection. Others who are deeper in their search peruse our microfilm files of Capitation and Freedman's Bureau records. Once the researchers enter, we try and gauge how far along they are in their work and offer as much help as we can. Whether we are able to aid them through the records we have or simply offer a Genealogy Guide to help them get started, no one will leave empty handed.



A PROCESSING ARCHIVIST'S JOB CAN BE QUITE SOLITARY. When compiling unsorted documents, photographs, audio recordings, and ephemera into a logical order, I consider how researchers will use this information. Having the opportunity to assist in our Reading Room is a welcome endeavor because it allows me to see firsthand how researchers engage with our collections and material culture.

Our researchers' requests are very interesting. For example, I recently worked with Dr. Barbara McCaskill, a nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African-American literature scholar and University of Georgia English professor. She was collecting data for her upcoming book, *Love, Liberation, and Escaping Slavery: William and Ellen Craft in Cultural Memory* (University

of Georgia Press), and requested images of William and Ellen Smith Craft, the couple who methodically plotted their freedom in the 1850s. We were able to provide a variety of images of the Crafts from the Craft and Crum Families Collection (AMN 1102), which had been donated to the Avery Research Center by Craft family descendants Julia-Ellen Craft Davis and Vicki Lorraine Davis. Earlier this year, images from the same collection, with a narrative commentary by Ms. Craft Davis, were featured on the Travel Channel's *Hotel Secrets and Legends* show. The segment highlighted the Planter's Hotel (presently the Dock Street Theater in Charleston, South Carolina) where the Crafts' stayed overnight during their flight to freedom. Another interesting researcher's request was from Katherine Lennard, an American Culture PhD candidate. Ms. Lennard's search for Ku Klux Klan (KKK) robes for her dissertation, “Made in America: Robes, Rituals, and the Ku Klux Klan, 1877–1937”,

SCHOLARLY RESEARCH

The Avery Research Center is nationally and internationally known for the holdings within our collection. Over the past semester, we have had local scholars researching Mosquito Beach to doctorate fellows from the University of Berlin exploring African retentions in the Lowcountry. We have fielded research queries from faculty at the University of Texas, Harvard University, Howard University, and Washington State. The Reading Room staff has explored vertical files, books, photograph files, and primary sources for scholars anxious to look within our collections. Our work has supported dissertations, historical markers and monuments, articles, and major academic press publications. Notable publications featuring research from materials at the Avery Research Center include: Dr. Bernard Powers's *Black Charlestonians*; Katherine Mellen Charron's *Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark*; Dr. Edmond Lee Drago's *Charleston's Avery Research Center*; and a host of Arcadia Publishing releases featuring images from our photographic materials.



The Avery Research Center's 6,000+ books on African, African-American, Gullah, and Lowcountry history and culture are available for researcher's use.

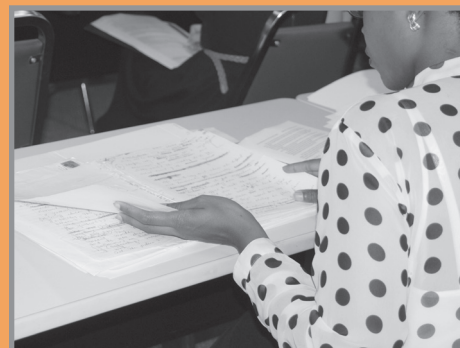
ELECTRONIC ACCESS

Not only do we host a variety of researchers in our Phillis Wheatley Literary and Social Club Reading Room, but we also provide services to researchers who are unable to visit in person. Often these requests come via email. We receive approximately one hundred emails a year through our **AveryResearchCenter@cofc.edu** address, as well as individual staff emails. Requests are also received by phone. For these distance users, we provide photocopies and scans, at a modest cost to the user, when appropriate. We also have digital collections available through the Lowcountry Digital Library (LCDL), <http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu>. By digitizing materials, we allow researchers easier access while at the same time limiting the physical use of the items, which helps us preserve our materials. Another way researchers can interface with our materials is through the Lowcountry Digital History Initiative (LDHI), <http://ldhi.library.cofc.edu>. The LDHI is a digital humanities project featuring exhibits that highlight underrepresented race, class, gender, and labor histories within the Lowcountry region, and in the historically interconnected Atlantic World sites. This allows visitors to see archival documents within a broader context. The LDHI is a partnership with the LCDL, the Avery Research Center, and the Carolina Lowcountry and Atlantic World Program (CLAW).

The opportunity to serve the public on a day-to-day basis in the Phillis Wheatley Literary and Social Club Reading Room is an amazing experience. We learn more and more about the collections and history we hold as the researchers bring new projects forward, providing a gratifying experience. The Reading Room staff looks forward to assisting all researchers as they come in search for truth through documents.



College of Charleston students from Dr. Julia Eichelberger's Charleston Writers Senior Seminar (English 400) class reviewing Avery Research Center collections.



Students from North Charleston, SC's Palmetto Scholars Academy researching materials from the Septima P. Clark Collection for their National History Day exhibit.

led her to the Avery Research Center. She identified our only robe on the Lowcountry Digital Library website (<http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/lcdl:54716>) from the Walter Pantovic Collection (AMN 1041), prompting her to travel to Charleston to examine in person. Fortunately for us, Lennard was also able to provide information and insight on our KKK robe that was not previously known to us. For example, she was able to specify the robe's date (circa 1920s) and rarity by its seamed construction. She also noticed the removal of its original insignia and the placement of a newer emblem on the opposite side (most likely during the 1960s), indicating the robes were updated and recycled. Additionally, Lennard mentioned the robes were sewn quickly to meet a fast and growing demand—a chilling thought.

The significance of our archival collections and their research value has been far reaching, whether the information the hold-

ings contain is documentation needed for a student paper, an author's book, or an image or audio recording for a film documentary. Our collections are organized and made available primarily for in-person use, but some are now available online, with many being digitized through the Lowcountry Digital Library. Yet, archives are only as good as the people who actively use them. Their research and participation informs, enlightens, and validates the importance of our collections and what we as archivists do on a daily basis. Working in our Reading Room brings my position full circle, for I am able to see exactly how our collections are being used. Archives bring awareness not only to researchers, but also to the archivists in ways that advise us in how we can do our jobs better. It is my and my colleagues' pleasure to assist in facilitating our visitors' requests!

The author expresses her sincere thanks to Dr. Barbara McCaskill and Ms. Katherine Lennard for their consent of mention in this article.

GIVING BACK

Is at the HEART Of Everything We Do at the Avery Research Center

by Patricia Williams Lessane, PhD

The Avery Research Center has always made giving back to the community a priority. Through partnerships and the support of other cultural arts and nonprofit organizations, the Avery Research Center has been able to share its resources in order to make a meaningful impact on the community. This is one of the reasons taking a position at Avery Research Center was appealing to me. My museum experience and philosophical approach to museum work comes from my belief that civic engagement and civic duty must ensure that all people have a seat at the table. In the case of Avery Research Center, this includes access to educational and cultural arts enrichment.

My experience at Chicago's Field Museum was invaluable in giving me a blueprint for how Avery Research Center could enhance its outreach and civic engagement. While there, I worked with diverse groups of community people to build the educational department's community partnership program; leverage the museum's resources to establish fruitful, long-lasting relationships with underserved constituents; and ultimately extend the museum's reach beyond the limestone columns to a much wider and varied city demographic. The lessons I learned from that experience have shaped the public history professional I

am today, and have helped me pursue similar types of partnerships for the Avery Research Center—including the South Carolina American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the International African American Museum (IAAM), and Southerners on New Ground (SONG).

(CAAR)), the Avery Research Center is able to share its resources and advance its mission to a much larger constituency. Even our online presence through the Lowcountry Digital Library (LCDL) and the Lowcountry Digital History Initiative (LDHI) permits more access to primary-source materials for those who

"Through partnerships and the support of other cultural arts and nonprofit organizations, the Avery Research Center has been able to share its resources in order to make a meaningful impact on the community."

I am proud to say that we Avery Research Center staff have parlayed our commitment to outreach by extending our services and access to cultural enrichment to the wider Charleston and tri-county community. Through outreach to Charleston, Dorchester, and Berkeley County schools (such as Sanders Clyde Elementary and Cane Bay High School), partnerships with other civic groups and churches (such as Cannon Street YMCA and Circular Congregational Church), and even national and international organizations (such as the Smithsonian Institution's Anacostia Community Museum and The Coliseum for African American Research

are unable to visit the Avery Research Center physically. The results have been fruitful and meaningful.

As we embark upon a yearlong celebration of the Avery Normal Institute's legacy, we will simultaneously re-calibrate our outreach efforts so that our programs, exhibitions, and preservation of archival records are readily accessible to our growing constituents and reflective of the legacy of African-American agency, scholastic excellence, and community uplift. Giving back—it's what we do every day at the Avery Research Center.

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DISCOVERING CHARLESTON IN LIVERPOOL:

Developing Trans-Atlantic Partnerships

by Mary Battle, PhD

In July 2014, through the support of College of the Charleston's Carolina Lowcountry and Atlantic World Program (CLAW), I traveled to Liverpool, England. My goal was to assist Dr. Conseula Francis and Dr. Bernard Powers in planning the field school for the College's new African American Studies major. I set up various meetings with scholars from the International Slavery Museum (ISM) and the University of Liverpool to develop collaborative online exhibition projects with the Lowcountry Digital History Initiative (LDHI) and promote partnerships with the Avery Research Center and CLAW.

Why Liverpool? In her 2005 publication, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool*, anthropology professor Jacqueline Nassey Brown (Hunter College, CUNY) presents a study of Liverpool's historic Black populations, as well as recent African and Caribbean immigrants, to consider the role of place in Black English identity and its connections to the history of slavery and the African diaspora. For centuries, shipping was Liverpool's "cash crop", asserts Nassey Brown, and merchants in this city managed trade throughout the British Empire, including the trans-Atlantic slave trade to English colonies such as South Carolina. This international seaport also featured its own diverse Arab, Chinese, South Asian, and African communities. The Black community in Liverpool particularly grew in the early nineteenth century with an influx of West African sailors who settled in the port. In the twentieth century, Liverpool's inhabitants became even more connected to a global Black world through various channels—from African-American World War II soldiers to Afro-Caribbean and West African immigrants.

I first read Nassey Brown's book in graduate school for a course on the sociology of race. Beyond her insightful theories of race, place, and national identity, something else fascinated me about Nassey Brown's descriptions of Liverpool that took a while for me to pinpoint. It became clearer once I finally traveled to the city—it was familiar. I got a similar feeling when I traveled to Barbados for research: a sense that these Atlantic ports formed through the same networks that formed South Carolina, particularly Charleston. And of course, they did.

As Caryl Phillips wrote in *The Atlantic Sound* (2001), "Like Liverpool, the city of Charleston also possesses a hidden history that is centered on the slave trade. While eighteenth-century Liverpool was the most important slave port in Europe, Charleston occupied the same position in North America." Phillips is an Afro-Caribbean writer from St. Kitts, West Indies who grew up in England. In *The Atlantic Sound*, he highlights connections between the Caribbean, West Africa, England, and the U.S. South not only through historical contexts, but also with the present-day feeling or *sound* of those



King's & Albert Docks, Liverpool, England. In the 18th century, Liverpool merchants played a dominant role in managing the trans-Atlantic slave trade from West Africa to colonies throughout the British Empire, including South Carolina. Thousands of voyages to Africa began at Liverpool's docks. Photo by Julian Nitzsche (2012).

connections. For example, while on a tour of the University of Liverpool campus, Phillips encounters Abercromby Square. The house at 19 Abercromby Square features a painting of a palmetto tree on the ceiling—the state tree of South Carolina—and he learned the house was originally built for Charles Kuhn Prioleau, a financial agent from Charleston who worked for the Confederacy. With intertwined trade economies, many former residents of this elite Square were both British and American Confederate sympathizers. As Phillips reflects about

Abercromby Square, "Discovering Charleston in Liverpool is strange, although the logic of this discovery is, of course, perfect." His final description of Liverpool could just as easily be of Charleston: "It is disquieting to be in a place where history is so physically present, yet so glaringly absent from people's consciousness. But where is it any different?" The history of slavery and its legacies are written in Liverpool's architecture, culture, and contemporary race and class struggles; but until recently, like in Charleston, this history has been overlooked or marginalized.

While in Liverpool, I participated in the conference "History and Public Memorialization of Slavery and the Slave Trade: Liverpool–Nantes", which was hosted by the ISM, the Center for the Study of International Slavery at the University of Liverpool, and the Institute for Black Atlantic Research. The event featured academic scholars and museum professionals from various parts of Europe, and they discussed possibilities for increasing public awareness of slavery and the slave trade in cities such as Nantes, France; Amsterdam, the Netherlands; and Liverpool. Throughout their discussions, I considered how Charleston's own struggles with addressing the history of slavery are similar and different, and how these questions could point towards international collaborations. Afterwards, I participated in various meetings with Drs. Richard Benjamin and Richard Huzzey, the co-directors of the Center for the Study of International Slavery (CSIS). Benjamin is also the director of Liverpool's ISM, which opened in 2007 and welcomed its millionth visitor in 2010. This museum features exhibits not only on the history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade,

but also on twentieth- and twenty-first century civil rights activism throughout the former British Empire. ISM grew through grassroots collaborations with local Black communities in Liverpool as well as partnerships with international scholars and museum professionals. It could also serve as an invaluable educational resource for College of Charleston study-abroad students, collaborative projects with the Avery Research Center, and potentially even Charleston's International African American Museum. I look forward to keeping everyone posted as these partnerships grow in the future.



Image is of the future home of the International Slavery Museum (ISM). The ISM opened August 2007 as part of the National Maritime Museum in Liverpool. In a few years, the ISM will move from the third floor of the Maritime Museum to this building on the Albert Dock. Photo by Nicholas Mutton (2008).

ERNEST E. JUST PRIZE

HONORING RESEARCHERS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH

By Kelly Doyle

On September 25, 2014 the Avery Research Center, along with the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), held the third annual Ernest E. Just Prize Lecture. The 2014 recipient of this award was Dr. Ndidi Amutah, a certified health education specialist who has taught courses on program planning and evaluation, and minority women's health. She has performed research in a variety of community-based settings to educate women and combat the spread of HIV/AIDS. Dr. Amutah's enlightening presentation was titled, "Project DASH: Divas Against the Spread of HIV".

The Ernest E. Just Prize in Medical and Public Health Research on African-American Health and Quality of Life was established in 2012 through a partnership between the Avery Research Center and MUSC. MUSC's annual Ernest E. Just Symposium seeks to foster relationships between researchers and the general community, and the Ernest E. Just Prize supplements the symposium's scope by celebrating the innovative research conducted by physicians and researchers whose work centers on treating and/or eradicating chronic diseases that disproportionately affect African Americans. The prize, spearheaded by Dr. Patricia Lessane (Avery Research Center) and Dr. Titus Reaves (MUSC), not only creates an award that honors these researchers, but also brings attention to the important medical issues they study.

Medical professionals conducting research that focuses on African-American health issues are encouraged to attend the Ernest E. Just Symposium and apply for the Ernest E. Just Prize. Past winners include Dr. Deidra Crews in 2013 for her celebrated work on kidney disease within the African-American community and Dr. Fatimah Jackson, the Prize's inaugural winner in 2012, who is a biologist, anthropologist, and professor at Howard University.

The prize is named for Ernest Everett Just, PhD (1883–1941), a pioneering African-American biologist from Charleston, SC. Just graduated from Dartmouth College and then began teaching at Howard University in 1907. In 1915, he became the first recipient of the NAACP's Spingarn Medal and in 1916, Just earned his PhD in experimental embryology from the University of Chicago. The Avery Research Center and MUSC honor Just's influential scientific research and trailblazing achievements through this annual award.

Submissions are currently being accepted for the 2015 Ernest E. Just Prize. Please send nominations to Dr. Titus Reaves at: reaves@musc.edu.



The Ernest E. Just commemorative stamp was issued by the U.S. Postal Service in 1996.

OUTREACH tidbits

The Avery Research Center sponsored two artists to conduct workshops for College of Charleston students and local youth. Last summer, Sweetgrass basket maker/educator Henrietta Snype held a series of sweetgrass basket making workshops at the Cannon Street YMCA (Charleston, SC) and St. James Presbyterian Church (James Island, SC). The participants ranged in age from 9 to 15 years old and were taught the history and technique of the art form over a four-week period. The workshops culminated with the participants completing a basket. The Sweetgrass Basket Making Summer Workshop is an extension of Snype's The Next Generation Project that was held at the Avery Research Center in 2009.

Harry Detry of Chicago's Studio 3-D was our Summer Artist-in-Residence. A company member of Muntu Dance Theater (Chicago, IL), Detry—a dancer, sculptor, and blacksmith—conducted a series of African dance classes at the College of Charleston, the Cannon Street YMCA, and Studio FX in conjunction with WoSe African Dance and Drum Company.

AVERY INSTITUTE MEMBERSHIP NEWS



**Tony Bell,
Membership
Chairman**

Greetings!

As 2014 draws to a close, we would like to thank you for your continued support. Hopefully, you've had a chance to attend some of the amazing programs the Avery Research Center has hosted this year.

The membership committee is busy updating member information on our respective lists. We want to ensure that members receive all pertinent information.

Also remember to visit us online at **www.averyinstitute.us** to see photo galleries of past events.

Thank you for doing your part to help the Avery Research Center advance its mission. If you have any questions please email us at: **averyinstitute@gmail.com**.

Tony Bell

Memorial



IN MEMORY OF DEPARTED CLASSMATES WHO
since our 50th class reunion (1990)
ARE GONE ... BUT NOT FORGOTTEN!

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Top: Avery Normal Institute graduating class of 1940.
Inset: Members of Avery Normal Institute Class of 1940 at their
50th class reunion (October 1990)



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FISK JUBILEE SINGERS® and CANE BAY HIGH SCHOOL CHOIRS SHARE IN SONG

by Savannah J. Frierson

The 2014–2015 Fisk Jubilee Singers® participated in a choral exchange with Cane Bay High School on October 17, 2014. Fisk Jubilee Singers director, Dr. Paul T. Kwami, led both groups in a rehearsal of “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”, which was the joint song both groups would perform in the Fisk Jubilee Singers concert later that evening. Additionally, each group performed a selection for the other, sharing their gifts and learning more about each other and the Negro spirituals in the process.

“ I thoroughly enjoyed the singing of these young students whose performance touched my heart and brought tears to my eyes. I am very thankful that such a wonderful choral music program is available to young men and women. The choral exchange program, although it lasted less than two hours, was very educational.” —Dr. Paul Kwami

Avery Research Center facilitated the exchange by putting Dr. Kwami and Mr. William Bennett, director of the Cane Bay Choirs, into contact with each other. Dr. Kwami then assigned the music to Cane Bay High School that would be jointly performed at the Fisk Jubilee Singers concert. In all, three Cane Bay High School students sang with the Fisk Jubilee Singers, to great success.



Bottom row center (l-r) Dr. Paul Kwami (Fisk Jubilee Singers® Music Director) and Mr. William Bennett (Cane Bay High School Choir Director) surrounded by Cane Bay High School choir members who participated in the rehearsal/workshop with the Fisk Jubilee Singers®.



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The Phillis Wheatley Literary and Social Club Reading Room is open to the public year-round, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 10:00am-12:30pm and 1:30pm-5:00pm except on College of Charleston holidays and winter break. To contact the Reading Room call 843.953.7608.

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